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Easyriders®

Issue 557

February 2022

Magazine

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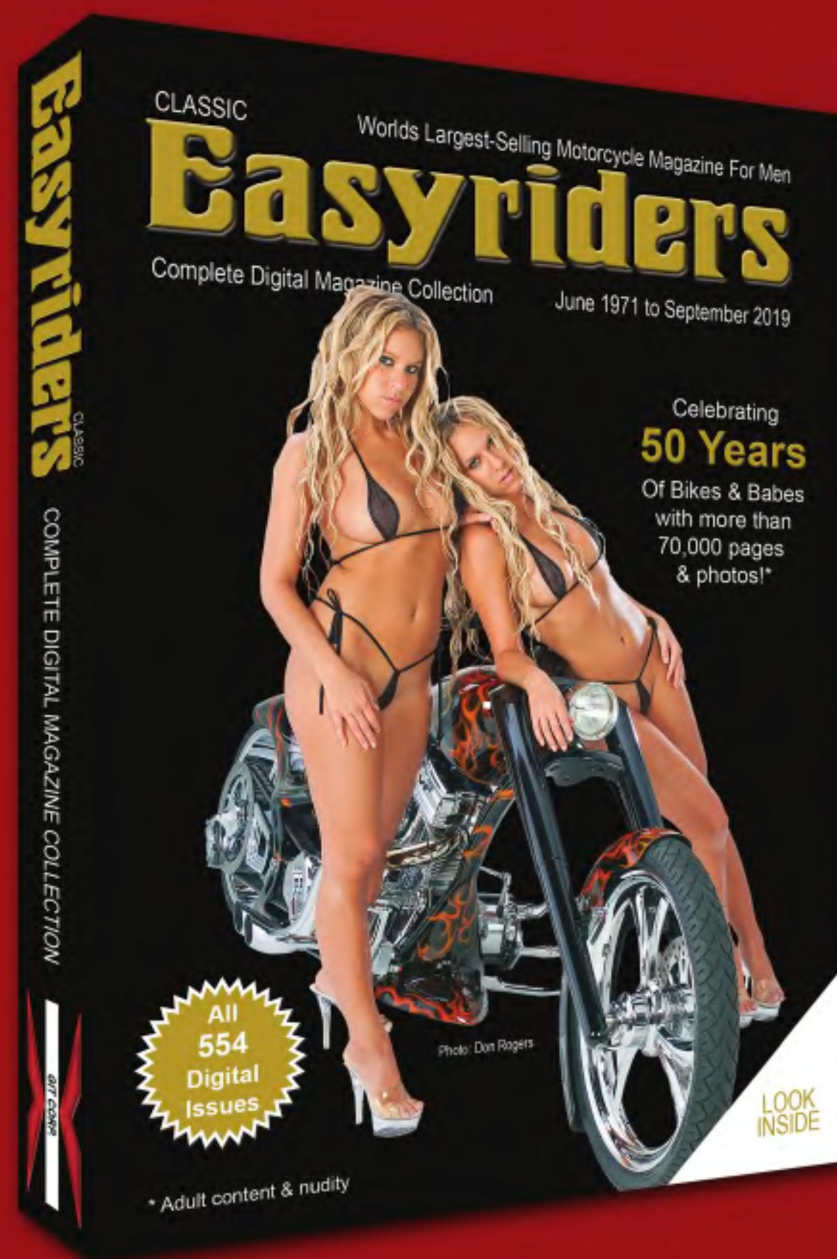
Valerie Thompson Interview

CHOPPERTOWN LIVE

Cherokee Blue Ridge Run

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Takin'itEasy

Steel Stomach

Givin' up booze can be tough. This dude in Lithuania was rushed to the hospital for abdominal pain and doctors were shocked and amazed at what they saw in his X-ray. It seems that the guy gave up alcohol about a month earlier and went bat shit crazy. He started eating metal objects and the X-ray revealed nails, nuts and bolts, screws... even a few knives in his guts. No wonder he had a tummy ache. The surgeons took three hours to remove all the metal objects and to repair the damage to the inner walls of his stomach. They decided to keep him under observation for a while and to hook him up with a shrink for psychological assistance.

Squirrelly News

Rodents and other small critters can be a real problem when they decide to nest in your car engine and eat your wiring. An insurance agent in Fargo, North Dakota, recently told local news that he has a perennial battle with a certain red squirrel. It seems that every autumn, the animal squirrels away walnuts for the coming winter inside his pickup truck. How many walnuts, you ask? Well, this year, he has collected almost 350 pounds of walnuts from around the engine, the wheel wells, the front bumper and parts of the doors. The insurance dude says he tried spraying the truck with a mixture of Tabasco sauce and cayenne pepper, but now he thinks the squirrel is actually attracted to the scent. Maybe the little nipper likes his walnuts spicy!

Stupid Criminal of the Month

Derbyshire, England police were hunting down a 36-year-old suspect in a string of thefts recently when they came across the burglar trying unsuccessfully to hide in a closet, under a blanket with his feet sticking out the bottom. The police department posted photos of the incident on Facebook, where Sgt. Tarj Nizzer was

quoted, "If you run from police, you will only go to jail tired. In this case he had his blanket ready for his sleep in the cell."

Another Idiot

Timothy Wolfe of Lake City, Florida, happily arrived at the Lake City Chrysler Dodge Jeep dealership to buy a new car. He was even ready with a car to trade in. When employees appraised the car and checked the VIN of the trade, they found it was a car that had actually been stolen from that very dealership just a few days earlier. Police were called, and Wolfe admitted to the theft, which had been captured on a surveillance camera. He was charged with grand theft and dealing in stolen property, among other crimes.

Humpty Took a Crap

Police in Madison, Wisconsin, are looking for a sculpture that was stolen from a local Art Fair. The unique piece, titled "Dumpty Humpty," is a bronze of the nursery rhyme character sitting on a toilet with his pants around his ankles and a book in his hands. It's supposedly worth \$1,400. The vendor told police she'd seen two men loitering around her booth, and when she stepped away, they vanished, along with the prized sculpture. So far, the fabled egg has not been returned to authorities.

Here... Hold My Beer

An unnamed man in Jacksonville, Illinois, went to the hospital last month with a gunshot wound to the chest. The victim told Cass County Sheriff Devron Ohrn that he and family members had been testing bulletproof vests, and he allowed another person to shoot him as he wore one. "Something like this is definitely not a good idea," Ohrn said. "A bulletproof vest is not a catchall. Also, it is still a crime to shoot another person, even if they tell you to." See? And you thought *Classic Easyriders* wasn't educational.

Free Car and Cadaver

Two men in Byram, Mississippi, couldn't believe their good luck when they came across a late model car with keys in the ignition and a "free car" sign on the windshield. They drove the car home and started to check it out. That's when they found a surprise in the trunk: the body of 34-year-old Anthony McCrillis. The body had been dead at least 24 hours, according to Copiah County Coroner Ellis Stuart. The men called 911 and waited for authorities, knowing that the "free car" was too good to be true.

Acid Rain

Several drivers along Highway 147 in Durham, North Carolina, recently experienced a shower of brown, greasy, bad-smelling liquid hitting their vehicles and subsequently damaging the paint. The smelly acidic stuff literally ate through the paint. The mystery was solved two days later, when representatives of the chemical wholesale company Brenntag informed the community that several of its employees had been depressurizing and disconnecting an empty sulfuric acid railcar at the company's facility next to the highway, causing acid vapor to be released into the air.

Musical Toots

Paul Oldfield, aka "Mr. Methane," enjoys the unusual gift of being able to pass gas on command. He discovered his talent while doing yoga with his sister as a teenager. It seems that Paul has found a way to make money with his surprising gift. Oldfield travels around the world "entertaining" audiences with parodies of songs by manipulating his buttocks in order to change the pitch of his musical farts and doing rapid fire releases. Maybe we'll see him on *America's Got Talent*!

Biker Saying of the Month

"You never see a motorcycle parked outside a psychiatrist's office."

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NEWSSTAND DISTRIBUTION
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1955 Lake Park Drive, 4th Floor
Smyrna, GA 30080

**PUBLISHED BY
AND
NEWSSTAND CIRCULATION**
GIT Corp.
P.O. Box 180482
Brooklyn, NY 11218-0482

classiceasyriders.com

February 2022 • Issue 557

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The Godfather of Choppers

MONDO'S DENVER'S
"CHIPS" CHOPPER



Revered as the “Godfather of Choppers” by many of his peers in the custom motorcycle world, Mondo can look back at an illustrious career in custom building as few can. From judging and putting on bike shows worldwide, to television appearances and hardcover books, his story is as unique as the man himself and his name is instantly recognizable for the long, lean bikes Denver’s Choppers is known for.

Of course, it wasn’t always just “Mondo.” In fact, during the early days, back in the sixties when he began his career at Denver’s Choppers in San Bernardino, Armando Porras was known as Bondo Mondo, due to his talent involving the famous shop’s sleek hand-fabricated custom frames.

Barely out of high school, Mondo had begun working with Denver Mullins, the original owner of the shop, building custom cars and hot rods. “We decided, at some point, to get some motorcycles and fix ‘em up,” Mondo recalls, “and that’s how we got into playing with bikes. We all bought Harleys and decided we didn’t like the way they looked, so we started building front ends and changing frames and customizing them, and pretty soon people came in and wanted us to do that to their bikes.”

That was shortly after 1967, the year Denver’s Choppers opened its doors, which made it one of the very first businesses in the emerging custom motorcycle industry to manufacture and sell custom parts and accessories. “Back then, there were no catalogs to order parts from, so within a short time, we were known worldwide as the guys to go to for custom parts for choppers,” Mondo explains.

Among the many innovations to come out of the small shop were items like rear fenders doubling as oil tanks, wildly stretched and raked molded frames, and especially springer front ends that kept getting longer and longer. Denver’s began building complete custom bikes and shipping them all over the world. It got to the point, according to Mondo, where “you couldn’t pick up a custom bike magazine without seeing a Denver’s bike in it.”

The Denver’s Chopper style is uniquely its own, according to Mondo, who describes it as long and low. “I’d call it Southern California style. What a lot of people today call a Swedish chopper, is actually a Denver’s chopper. We used to send a lot of bikes over



Many years ago, Denver owned a chopper with a gas tank that looked like a California Highway Patrol, or “CHIPS” bike. Mondo thought he would revise the theme here as a tribute to Denver Mullins. Mondo is bringing back the old school molded rigid frame with scooters like this one. The more you study the details and craftsmanship on this gooseneck wonder, the more you’ll be amazed. In fact, notice how the handmade gas tank appears to be molded into the frame. In actual fact, the trick tank is removable.

This build began with a 1940 Harley-Davidson Knucklehead 74 cubic inch EL motor that was lovingly rebuilt by the late Bret Hatt. The heads are by Aaron Greene, the cam and lifters are by Sifton and the carb is a faithful S&S E. This chopper has an electric start and Mondo used a Baker 6-in-a-4 tranny. The long rigid frame was welded together by Kyle Brewer at Paughco Motorcycle Parts and has a 42 degree rake and 4 inches of stretch in the downtube. Paughco also handled the oil bag. Range Needleworx stitched up the seat, the rear fender is by Bates, the headlight is from Drag Specialties and the taillight is from Prism MC Supply but most of the rest is all Mondo.

to Sweden, and there’s a motorcycle club in Sweden right now called Denver’s Choppers. It’s been there since the seventies. We were also the first ones who came up with the gooseneck frames.”

It all came to a tragic end, however, in October of 1992, when Denver, who also dabbled in drag boats, drowned during a test run with a safety capsule he and Mondo had designed. For the following year-and-a-half, Mondo stayed at the shop to settle outstanding accounts and take care of legal matters. “What I did was focus more on the drag boats but was still building bikes in the shop as well,” he says.

On June 30, 1997, he re-opened Denver’s Choppers, having moved to Henderson, Nevada, just outside of Las Vegas. “During that time some of the

things I am most-proud of happened to me,” he says. “First off, my association with *Easyriders* Magazine. I could not have done it without the magazine’s support and help over the years. In 2001 I was awarded the trophy for Best Custom Bike Fabricator from *Easyriders*. I also had the extreme pleasure of being in David Mann’s last painting for the 30th anniversary of *Easyriders*. This was a huge deal to me.” Mondo was honored to be awarded the first ever David Mann Kind Award from the David Mann Chopper Fest, and he was installed into the Sturgis Motorcycle Hall of Fame in 2018.

In 2012 he moved to Reno to be near his daughter and her family and try to slow down a bit, running his one-man-shop in a strip mall near the city’s airport. “But

slowing down has not really happened. I still work seven days a week because I love it so much,” Mondo says. “The shop is always filled with bikes, new builds, customers’ bikes, my collection and my friend Gerald Casey’s collection who helps me out at the shop. In fact, we built a radical Knucklehead for Gerald for the Michael Lichter ‘Motorcycle as Art Museum Show’ at the Sturgis Buffalo Chip last year.”

That brings us to the classic Denver’s long bike seen here. I saw this chopper at Mike’s show and also at Mondo’s “School’s Out” Chopper Show at the Chip. One look at this nasty Knuckle and I knew we had to showcase it here in *Classic Easyriders*. I mean, this is what a chopper is supposed to look like!





That includes the classic 20-inch over Denver's narrow springer front end and drag bars, that cool custom molded yet removable gas tank, upsweep fishtail exhaust, and long sissybar. This scooter sits perfectly with a one-of-a-kind 21-inch Akront aluminum wheel up front and an 18-incher out back. Like all Denver's Choppers there's zero flop in that front end. Mondo has the perfect formula to make a nimble chopper on which you'll ride like a king.

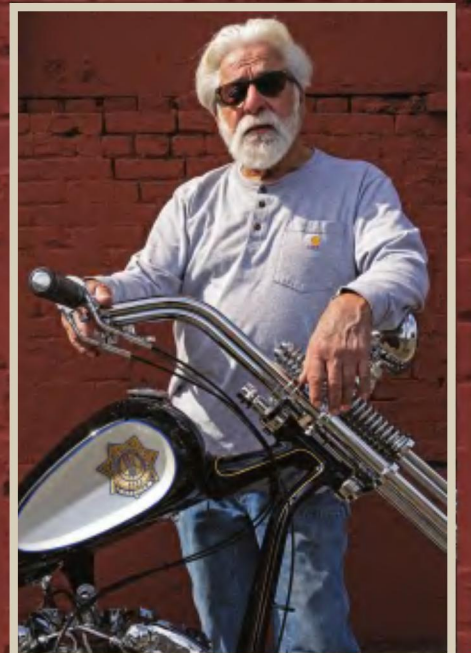
After more than 50 years in the business, Mondo still adheres to the old Denver's philosophy, and his front ends, rolling chassis, and complete bikes are as innovative, old-school, and mind-blowing

as they were during the early days. "The front ends are our bread and butter," he says about the trademark look that defines many of the bikes he builds.

Mondo's fully involved in the Reno custom bike scene and has several of his own custom shows, most notably during Street Vibrations but also in places like Hollister and farther afield. After more than 50 years into his career, Mondo shows no signs of slowing down. "I am still building quite a few long bikes the old Denver-style way for customers from all over the country and beyond," Mondo says. "Most of my customers are hard-working Americans young and old who love choppers. I still build a lot of Springer front ends that go all over the world."

As far as retirement goes, Mondo says although he's in his 70s now, he's loving it more and more every day as the bikes get better with every build, with new ideas and challenges. "That makes it all worthwhile and exciting to come to work every day," he says. "I don't want to ever retire. I'm having too much fun building bikes and hot rods. My running joke is that if you ever find me in my shop bent over my welding table with my hood on and the part finished I was working on, I died a happy man."

Make sure to attend Mondo's "School's Out" Chopper Show at the Sturgis Buffalo Chip this coming August and shake the hand of this living legend. —*Dave Nichols*



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Photos: Michael Lichter



**Cover Model:
Amanda Pizziconi**

Imagine being a bright little girl, growing up around the San Francisco Bay area in a household full of hot rods and motorcycles. Imagine seeing your dad, a sheetmetal worker by trade, who was into building vintage Indians and even created handmade handlebars and exhaust pipes for his friends and those in his riding group.

Imagine that young inquisitive girl spying her dad's collection of *Easyriders* magazines and sneaking out to the garage for a look through all those pictures of classic choppers, wild women, and hard ridin' men on their way to righteous runs, rallies and parties. Can't you just see that pretty little girl picking up the faded paper of a dog-eared copy and smiling at the biker babe pictured on the cover? Perhaps she even thought to herself... "Someday. Someday I'll be on the cover, sitting on a shiny, long chopper."

Now fast forward a bit over 20 years to

when that gorgeous girl turned fashion model, Amanda Pizziconi, got a phone call from the publisher of *Classic Easyriders* magazine to line up a cover shoot with her on one of Mondo's famous Denver's Choppers. "My life has truly come full circle," Amanda tells us. "To think that I grew up around a big riding community in the Bay area, with my dad riding, wrenching and reading *Easyriders*, and now I'm on the cover. I'm thrilled!"

Amanda's dad isn't the only man in her life who has a shop full of old *Easyriders*. Her boyfriend Ryan Cox is a SoCal rider and custom bike builder whose bikes have been awarded at Born Free, David Mann Chopper Fest and other chopper shows. His 1939 80-inch UH flathead chopper was even featured in *Easyriders* back in 2019. "I found Ryan on social media," Amanda recalls. "I saw photos of him with his bike. Ticked all my boxes." Ryan and Amanda were instantly inseparable. "He is

teaching me about bikes, how to wrench and ride," Amanda smiles. "The biker community is so strong. I love being part of that family."

Ryan was returning from the Death Valley Run when we were shooting Amanda on Mondo's chopper. "He called me to tell me he was coming back a day early," Amanda says. "I told him to swing by the shoot. He had no idea it was for *Classic Easyriders*." Ryan was blown away. He got to meet a living biker legend and a legendary motorcycle culture photographer.

To top all this, Amanda recently won a 1992 FXRT in a raffle and now she is up on two wheels of her own. "I've always been around motors," Amanda concludes. "It's so cool the way all this comes around and how this came together." She says she hopes to have a chopper of her own... someday.

—Dave Nichols

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Some Styles Never Get Old
The Original S&S Teardrop Air Filter

S&S Cycle has been making performance parts for over 50 years. One of the company's signature products is its cast aluminum Teardrop Air Filter assembly. Over the last 50 some years, we have used them on several bikes and have been more than satisfied with their performance and appearance.

Naturally, one of their versions includes a fitment for Harley's 1993-up cable-operated throttle bikes. After seeing the gloss black finish version of the Tear Drop filter kit on the Dennis Kirk website, we thought it would give this 2015 Dyna Street Bob a flat ass killer look. So, we ordered one; DK part number 188558,

for the Street Bob.

The air filter kit is made up using four basic parts: the engine breather, the back plate, the filtering element, and the cover. The engine breather assembly uses a machined aluminum adapter that fits between the motor's throttle body and the air filter's back plate. One of the air filter's performance features is that the back plate has a smooth radius on its outlet leading into the throttle body. The inside of the filter cover is also contoured internally to direct the air from the inner surface of the filtering element into the throttle body.

Installing the Teardrop air filter only requires a few hand tools and about an hour of time. The air filter's cylinder head

breather hoses channel the motor's internal air/oil residue through the air filter back plate. We installed the air filter kit on our old stand-by, a 2015 Street Bob, which has the stock throttle body. Everything lined-up and bolted on just as it should. The finished installation works great and it gave the bike an old school look that we like a lot.

—John Sullivan

S&S Cycle
sscycle.com

Dennis Kirk
denniskirk.com





1. The Street Bob's chopper style is a perfect fit for the S&S Teardrop Air Filter's styling. It really finished the bike's old school look, and the cover has a great polished black finish, which we highlighted with silver paint in the "S&S" lettering.



2. The kit's air filtering sub-assembly is made up from three main parts: the back plate, the filtering element, and the cover.



3. The other sub-assembly is the cylinder breather system; it feeds the motor's oiling system residue into the throttle body throat.



5. The air filter's breather system uses molded hoses and an adapter ring to connect the cylinder heads' breather ports to the inlet of the throttle body.



4. Our starting point: we have removed the stock air filter and its housing.



6. We have attached the aluminum breather adapter to the motor's throttle body.



7. The breather's molded hoses are fitted to the air filter kit's banjo bolts, which are then fastened to the heads' breather ports.



8. The air filter back plate is secured to the throttle body adapter with three screws; we used blue LockTite on the screws.



9. The washable filtering element fits tightly to the back plate assembly.



10. The outer cover was then secured to the back plate by three screws, on which we again used blue LockTite.

Photos: John Sullivan

BACK BURNER



In the greatest hey-days of chopper popularity, Ben Jordan got to hang around and help out at the custom shop of Click Baldwin's Carolina Harley-Davidson with the legendary blacksmith of custom chopper royalty Jimmy Bortles. Ben learned something with every bike Jimmy built. He took many critical skills with him and managed to hold on to one of Jimmy's hand-drawn wiring schematics. He even had it laminated and still refers to it on every bike.

Those enviable days helped transform Ben into a well-seasoned custom bike designer and builder. Four of his bikes have featured prominently in Michael Lichter's invitation-only bike show at the "Motorcycles as Art" exhibitions at the Sturgis Buffalo Chip.

Fifteen years ago when Ben was building his own bikes out of necessity, he got a frame from Bare Knuckle Choppers and had someone make these crazy cool spoke wheels. Eventually, Ben's idea took shape as a roller, but no one would have imagined it would be all but forgotten.

His best friend Asher Dills was eyeing that roller every time he was in Ben's garage and convinced Mr. Jordan to build it for him. They planned to finish it by working together. Nearly as soon as Asher bought the roller, life events that have a way of getting in front of everything started lining up at his door. He recalls thinking, "So much for the kind of custom

machine that only dreams are made of." But he knew they would get the bike together someday. The roller was pushed out of the way and around the shop for ten long years, during which time demands for Ben's work grew. Asher continued to bounce back, but top priority eluded the roller project. One day the phone rang and it was Michael Lichter, looking for another

masterpiece from Ben for his Sturgis show in 2018.

That phone call led to the bike that Ben calls "Back Burner" finally getting finished and seeing the light of day for Lichter's Passion Built show. Everyone says this bike is classy and clean. Ben says, "Of course it looks simple, but this is one of the most complex builds I have ever been involved with."



A custom machine through and through, every single part has been modified. The amount of time Ben put into it is unimaginable and every detail is amazing. For instance, the fuel tank truly defines what a chopper tank should be. Ben started with an aftermarket tank, cut the sides out, narrowed it, stretched it, sectioned it, and raised the tunnel to make





it ride the frame more like a Frisco-style tank. It went through final mock up, weld, seal, and pressure testing before Ryan Young of Indocial Art and Design slung on a few coats of custom paint. All that just to look cool and hold some fuel. Ben also wants to thank talented builder Josh Siler for his help with this beauty.

As for Asher? He couldn't be more pleased with Back Burner. These two friends grew up together riding off-road and terrorizing their Waxhaw, North Carolina neighborhood together with wheelie-fueled juvenile shenanigans. Ben tells us the best part of putting the bike together, was working with his friend Asher. They still ride together, and enjoy riding the 100-million-dollar stretch of road called Cherohala Skyway.

The famous Loop consists of close to half the roads of the Smoky Mountains, covering 245 miles and takes eight hours to ride. You start and end this epic ride at Maggie Valley, North Carolina, to enjoy many sweepers, twisties, and all the mountain beauty you can imagine.

—Jeff “Cheese” Moore



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Photos: Michael Lichter



A Story Seldom Heard

"It's a chopper, baby!"
—Bruce Willis in *Pulp Fiction*

The Men Behind Captain America

Long and nimble, its chrome frame seemed to disappear in the desert colors, leaving only an American flag-painted peanut tank, floating and ethereal. Commanding its sojourn, an equally nimble man called Wyatt “went looking for America...” as the movie poster for *Easy Rider* proclaimed. I was only fifteen years old as I sat in the dark movie theater, and like many of you who are reading this, that film changed my life.

Thirty years later, as the editor of *Easyriders* magazine, I sat in a movie theater in New Orleans with Peter Fonda sitting next to me. We were there to commemorate the 30th Anniversary of the film and he gave me some insights

regarding the true meaning of the movie made for the Woodstock generation. We watched the movie together and both recited every line of dialog. “I wanted to make a modern western,” he told me. “That’s why you see the bikes sitting in the background of the campfire scenes, like tethered horses. That’s why I wore spurs on my boots.” The story of *Easy Rider* is the story of where we were headed as a country. “Though they seem to be free, Wyatt and Billy sold out to get their act together and retire in Florida.”

Yet everywhere they turn in the film, the two bikers meet people who are living off the land and creating a separate reality from society. “You do your own thing in your

own time, you should be proud,” Wyatt tells the farmer who allows him to use his barn and tools to change his flat tire interspersed with images of shoeing a horse.

The two riders discover another group at a commune who are living separate from the rat race. “There’s nothin’ but sand, man. They ain’t gonna make it.” Billy tells Wyatt, showing him the lifeless sandy soil that the hippy planters are trying to revive.

“They’re gonna make it, man,” Wyatt replies. “Dig, man.” While Wyatt portrays the spirit of America, our ideals and freedoms, Dennis Hopper’s character of Billy is the wild west cowboy, the rebellious spirit that drove frontiersmen west, stealing land from the native people and taking

over the country no matter what it took. Together, the two symbols of America tell a mythic tale, one that ends with their demise. But on their last night on earth, Wyatt figures it out. “You know, Billy—we blew it.” The fact that most movie-goers never saw the deeper meaning of *Easy Rider* was something that Peter Fonda was enigmatic about. He told me that the deeper truths of the story were right there on the screen for people to see.

“*Easy Rider* changed a generation and started a cult movement,” says Mondo Porras of Denver’s Choppers. Along with Ron Paugh of Paughco Motorcycle Parts, Mondo has been studying the two most iconic motorcycles of all time, the choppers from *Easy Rider*, for over 50 years. Together, these two industry giants will be creating the amazing replica of the Captain America chopper that you can win in the Classic Easyriders Sweepstakes.

“That movie changed the custom motorcycle industry,” Mondo recalls. “After seeing *Easy Rider*, people who weren’t into motorcycles started buying motorcycles. By 1970, everybody wanted a chopper. Denver’s Choppers blew up because people wanted to experience some of the freedom found when riding a chopper. It started a movement that hasn’t ended. It made choppers cool.”

Many people don’t realize that the two collaborators who came together to build the original bikes for the movie were black men and back in the 1960’s and ’70s, black bike builders didn’t get the credit they deserved, to say the least. Ask Sugar Bear, known for building choppers and long springer front ends out of his shop in Springville, California since the 1970s. “The Billy bike was what everybody was riding in the black bike clubs back in the day,” he recalls.

Sugar Bear’s mentor was none other than the “King of Bikes,” southern California custom bike builder Benny Hardy. Ben knew that he would never get the credit he deserved for building the Captain America and Billy bikes but advised Sugar Bear that a person’s work will always speak for itself. Together with black civil rights activist and bike builder Cliff Vaughs and mechanic Larry Marcus, they hand-crafted the legendary choppers after Vaughs had a chance meeting with Peter Fonda.

At the time, Vaughs was a biker, a member of The Chosen Few MC, and had built bikes himself. He had also worked as a civil rights activist and photographer with the Student Nonviolent Coordinating Committee, and was a member of the newsroom at the Los Angeles radio station KRLA. Vaughs said he first met Fonda in his role at KRLA. In the summer of 1966, Fonda was arrested and charged with possession of marijuana. Vaughs said he covered Fonda’s court appearance for KRLA and, in the process, got to talking with the young actor about motorcycles. “Not long after,” Vaughs said, “Fonda and Dennis Hopper came by my apartment in West Hollywood, and discussed early plans for a motorcycle movie, and building the bikes they would need.”

Vaughs designed the look of the bikes based on design ideas by Fonda and brought in Ben Hardy to purchase the motorcycles’ Panhead engines from a Los Angeles Police Department auction. Fonda

liked the political incorrectness of having his rebel machines powered by cop bike motors. The movie company purchased the finished choppers for just \$875 apiece.

The two original bikes from the film were stolen out of Dennis Hopper’s garage before the film was even released, but the Captain America chopper that was blown up for the film’s climax was reassembled by actor Dan Haggerty (who appears in the film) and went up for auction in 2014. In an interview about the auction with NPR radio in 2014, Cliff Vaughs talks about the fact that he and Ben never really got the credit they deserved in creating the two most iconic motorcycles in history but concludes, “I’m really not worried about getting any credit for this, because I know what I did,” Vaughs said. “People who were close to me were there in the yard when I was building those bikes.”

Though Ben Hardy died in 1999, and Clifford Vaughs passed in 2016, we are hoping to bring some of their family together during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally in 2022 when we give away our replica of the Captain America chopper to a lucky winner on the main stage of the Sturgis Buffalo Chip.

To conclude this whole wild journey, Mondo reminds us that when it comes to chopper builders, “Today, the strong have survived. When the bottom fell out in 2008, it cleansed the industry and took it back to be a pure business driven by a lifestyle again. It has all come full circle. To know where you’re going, you have to know where you’ve been.” Having been in the custom bike field for over 50 years, Ron Paugh and Mondo are the perfect pair to create our replica of the Captain America chopper. “You can step on us but you can’t kill us,” Mondo laughs. “We’ll be the last ones standing after the holocaust... just like cockroaches.”

Choppers will always be cool, and for those who ride, they will always be a symbol of freedom. “We’re the modern day cowboys,” Mondo tells us. “That’s why I’m so excited to be building this Captain America chopper for *Classic Easyriders*.” I hope that Peter Fonda, who passed in 2019, is smiling down at us and flashing a peace sign.

Watch your Captain America chopper come together every month right here in the pages of the world’s best biker rag.

—Dave Nichols

Photos: Kai Raacke

ANCIENT R T

Takatoshi Suzuki's
1967 Teal Racer



The motorcycle seen here is part of a proud tradition that can be traced back to Japanese sword-making around 300 CE. Since the early Kofun period, metal artisans fashioned miracles from metal and made magic in the ancient art of using the elements of fire, water, wind, earth, and ether to create the impossible. This honored tradition has been passed down from master to apprentice since time out of mind. To taste the tiniest morsel of this

honored metal crafting tradition, we take you back in time to the creation of the great curved blades made after the Heian period (794 to 1185 CE) when the katana, odachi, tachi, and wakizashi blades were hewn from the molten earth, making those samurais who wielded them, living gods. During the 14th century, the iconic Masamune was considered Japan's greatest swordsmith. His swords were of superior quality and possessed remarkable beauty. Masamune is thought to have brought

perfection to the art of "nie" where steel becomes a crystalline structure resembling stars in the evening sky. He started a school and trained followers in the alchemical art of making miracles from metal. In a similar very Japanese tradition, modern motorcycle maestros bend steel, work to weld metals, and fabricate ideas into living, breathing works of two-wheeled art. Meet Takatoshi Suzuki. Though his name may conjure thoughts of a certain famous Nippon motorcycle



motorcycle master, as is the Japanese tradition, in 2015, Takatoshi was ready to go out on his own and started Seven Motorcycles in his hometown of Sendai where he has been building unique, one-off motorcycles for customers ever since.

Coming from the honored craft of metal mastery that harkens back to ancient sword-making, Takatoshi fabricates almost all of his parts in-house, rarely resorting to the increasing number of cool off-the-shelf offerings available on the market. In his mind, this Japanese tradition that he operates within, allows him to turn dreams into reality in motorcycles that are as stylish and beautiful as they are functional.

This blend of form and function is what is so important for Takatoshi. “Skinny Teal,” the 1967 custom Harley-Davidson Panhead with a Shovel top you see before you on these pages, is something that he has wanted to build for a long time. It is the style he loves and the style he wants to ride. Takatoshi believes he has achieved a flowing silhouette while retaining a race-ready seating position, and that it has a vintage look despite the beautiful paint and glowing parts.



manufacturer, his expertise is found in his abiding love for creating custom Harley-Davidsons.

In the proud tradition of such Asian master moto-artists as Shinya Kimura, Yasuyoshi “Chica” Chikazawa, Hiromichi “Hiro” Nishiyama, Hideya “Hide” Togashi, Keino Sasaki, Kaichiroh “Kross” Kurosi, Zak Take Shibazaki, Yoji Kikuhara, Koji “Hammer” Hamada, and Hideki Hoshikawa, Takatoshi is dedicated to making choppers by hand with the same focused attention of all the metal masters who have come before him in this sacred practice.

He hails from the city of Sendai in Miyagi Prefecture about 230 miles north of Tokyo where he raced moto-cross. After graduating high school, Takatoshi went to the Akamon Mechanic School to specialize in Harleys. Following mechanics school, he put in five years at a Harley-Davidson dealership while also working with customizer Koji Hamada at Hammer Sycle in his spare time, nights and holidays.

From Hammer’s shop, he went to Asterisk Custom Works to work closely with master builder Hideki Hoshikawa for four and a half years. Having apprenticed under this





The bike is part bobber, part chopper, part classic racer, and all the way cool. The racing handlebars, tucked in exhaust, and chromed seat pan give it purely race appeal and the traditional springer front end, peanut tank, and rigid frame wrapped in eye-catching teal with silver scrolled flames is the stuff of old school choppers from the early 1970s. Kind of the best of all worlds.

Suzuki took a 1967 FLH 1200cc motor with a H-D 4-speed tranny and modified the Harley frame to get the stance he was looking for. That chrome springer is a Cannon Ball VL-type front end. Everything you see here has been massaged and modified to stunning perfection and it was more than enough to make a long-time dream of his come true.

You see, Takatoshi has had a dream to come out to Sturgis, South Dakota, for the annual mega motorcycle rally and to bring along one of his custom bikes to the United States. I mean, it's on every biker's bucket list, right? Both dreams came true when Mike Lichter asked Takatoshi to put "Skinny Teal" in his Motorcycles as Art show in 2019. The invitation came about after he was awarded the Michael Lichter trophy at the Mooneyes Yokohama Hot Rod and Custom Show where Mike acknowledged how well this bike fit the "What's the Skinny" theme of that year's exhibition. —*Dave Nichols*



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Photos: Michael Lichter



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So many great bikes, so many familiar faces! Born Free is the ultimate chopper show, of course. But for me and so many others, it is also a well-deserved reunion. With the show canceled due to COVID in 2020, and then the postponement and rescheduling of the 2021 event from its traditional June slot to late August, we were all eager to get out and see each other in person.

BORN FREE 12: THE REUNION



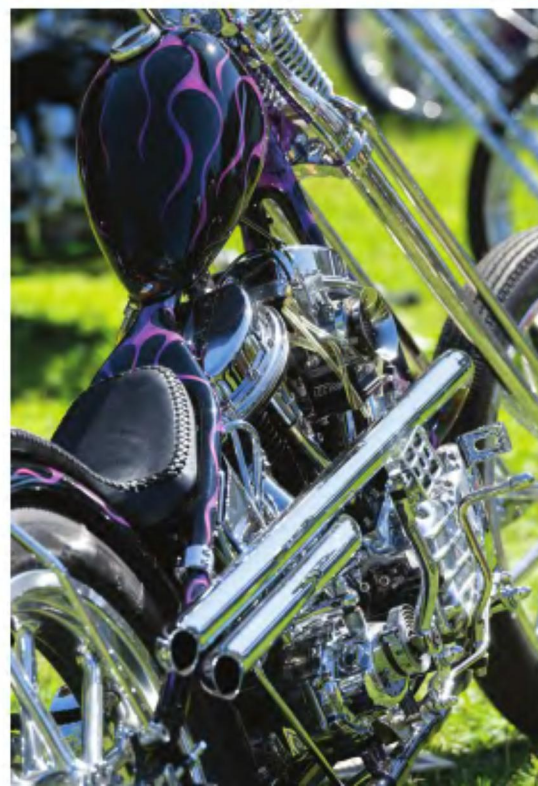
Joined at the hip to Born Free, and always scheduled the night before the show opens, is the People's Champ Competition at Cook's Corner on Friday night. This event, sponsored entirely by Biltwell, is the defacto kick-off pre-party for the weekend. As you walked around, you couldn't go more than a few feet without running into someone you hadn't seen in a long time.

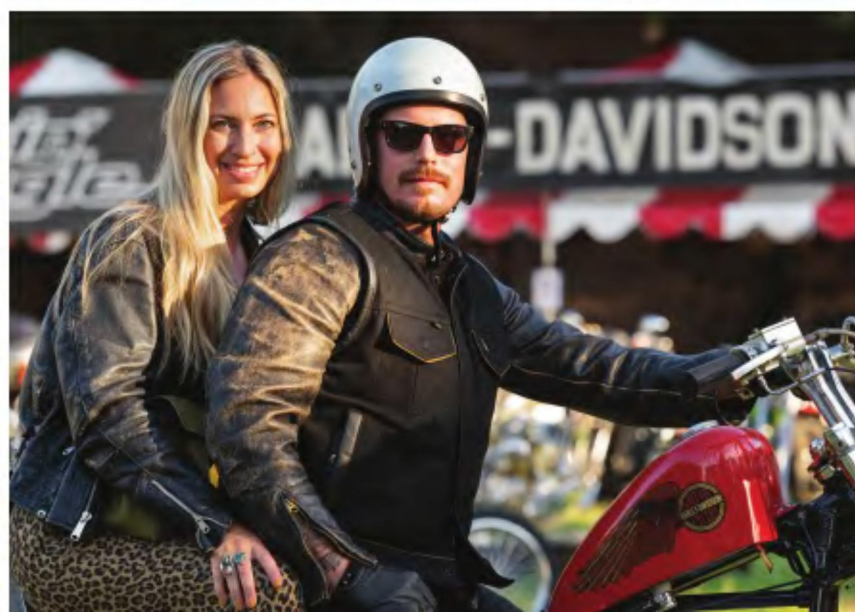
The People's Champ competition would typically include six bikes, but due to travel restrictions, the two bikes from Korea and England couldn't make it. The four remaining bikes completed their mandatory shake-down ride Friday morning and were displayed on pedestals on the large concrete pad behind the bar. In the end, it was Cliff Cavins who took this year's grand prize home for his somewhat perplexing single-sided right-

side only handlebar '79 Shovelhead with a front exhaust that ran straight into the down tube. For this, he was awarded \$10,000 (\$6,500 more than Born Free's Best of Show) along with the honor of putting his bike into the "Invited Builder" corral to be viewed and judged against the rest of the Invited Builder bikes.

One big difference between this year's show and all 11 previous Born Free events is that the Invited Builders had nearly two full years to prepare this year. The extra time may have been ideal for perfectionists like Christian Newman and Hawke Lawshe, two Invited Builders who typically have more complex engineering behind their builds.

Saturday morning, game on! Walking into Oak Canyon Ranch, you could sense the excitement. The builders were in the





corral early with their cleaning kits spit polishing their bikes. Sure, they were focused on making their bikes look the best they could, but they were also eyeing each other's work. Each builder had to turn in a voting card with their top three picks that were the basis for the first round of awards that same afternoon. The anticipation was palpable.

As always, the gates opened to the public at 10am. For whatever reason, the crowd seemed to build slower than in years past when they would be lined up fender-to-fender in front of the entry gate early in the morning. Regardless, as the day went on, bikes rolled in steadily until the numbers were virtually the same as in 2019—so the show's overall look was quite similar. For those that got on it early and purchased a "Grass Pass" online (before they sold out), they rolled right onto the grounds filling what little space was available inside the venue and becoming part of the show.

There was more to see than time allowed—between the very cool vendors, great displays, shows within the show, and live music on both the Main and *Dice* Magazine stages. For me, one of the sillier standouts was Mark Atkins' endearing alpaca "Rusty," in the Rusty Butcher booth, replete with helmet and goggles.

Brandon Wurtz and Ryan Stallcup's Rawhide Cycles' 1966 Shovelhead in a box, or more accurately, custom Harley in a massive replica of a yellow Kodak camera box, also brought an immediate smile to the face of anyone who walked by. Not only was I smiling, but I laughed outright as the "Ramonahs" played the big stage. This all-drag Ramones tribute band led by the infamous tattoo artist and judge on the *Ink Master* reality TV show Oliver Peck was an absolute hoot. Oliver explained, "We just got up there, acted like idiots, and a lot of people got a kick out of it." Another crowd-pleaser was The Ive's





Brothers Wall of Death. There was a long line to get up into the big wooden barrel to watch this thrilling vertical wall stunt show all weekend long.

With Born Free being one of the premier bike shows in the world, there's no question it's the incredible customs that bring everyone together. For starters, you can pull right in and find yourself surrounded by excellent bikes parked right out on the grass. Then there's the great FXR and Dyna sub-shows sponsored by San Diego Customs, and a guest corral for bikes identified as worthy of being in this particular area close to the stage. It included builds from past invited builders, cool old bikes, a group of period British bikes, survivors; all the way to the other side of the spectrum with an art-deco-inspired hand-fabbed air-ride sidecar rig. This area alone would be a show in and of itself anywhere else.

The show's primary sponsor, Harley-Davidson, had a good-looking display

right near the main stage. Many questioned Born Free for taking this industry behemoth on as a corporate sponsor a few years ago, but it seems to have worked out well for everyone. They had a tasteful layout of new bikes, appropriate goods offered from their museum store, as well as another invited builder display that demonstrated what top builders could do with contemporary platforms.

The crown jewel of Born Free is undoubtedly the "Invited Builder" corral. Here, you will see the bikes that vie for the "Best of" awards in categories like Best Knucklehead, Best Panhead, Best Sportster, Best Paint, Best Digger, and more. The most coveted are the two biggest prizes, including a "Best of Show" as voted by the builders on Saturday and the People's Choice "Best of Show" awarded Sunday. These each include a \$3,500 check along with a trip to Japan for the builder and his motorcycle so they can



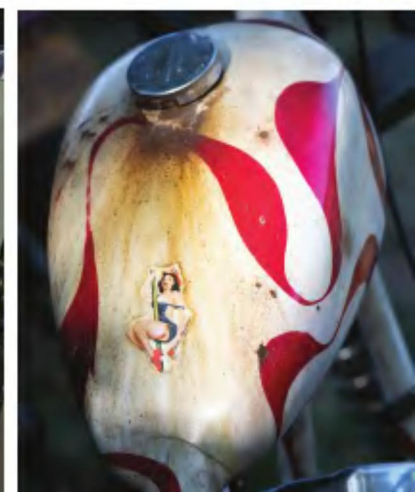
be part of the Yokohama Mooneyes Show in December.

The bike chosen by the builders for their Best of Show went to Jake Wreesman for his 1948 Harley-Davidson Panhead. This classic chrome framed chopper showed off Jake's metalcraft skills, not only on the beefed-up downtube section of the frame but also with very elegant bracketry.

The Sunday "Best of Show" award came with a twist as it was for the first time a tie going to both of the builders mentioned above, Hawke Lawshe for his supercharged Arlen Ness-inspired 96-inch Shovelhead and Christian Newman for his eight-valve extreme custom 1939 ULH. I was surprised on Saturday as Hawke's bike got a third-place overall when the builders acknowledged each other, and then Christian's bike got no mention at all. I

believe both bikes to be exceptional examples of craftsmanship that push the limits of materials, engineering, and style. But then, with every person having their unique sensibility as to what looks right, and the underlying point that Born Free started as a vintage chopper show, many would like to keep it that way.

I see it as quite an endorsement of Born Free and how respected it is that Brad Richards, Harley-Davidson's VP of Styling and Design, was at the show all weekend with members of his design team to check out what is relevant in the world of custom bikes. He also gave out a special Harley-Davidson Styling and Design Award to one of the builders. Even more interesting is that Jochen Zeitz, the recently appointed President and Chief Executive Officer of Harley-Davidson, also spent the weekend





BORN FREE 12



Photos: Michael Lichter

there. That's what I call "boots on the ground!"

Most shows have a problem keeping the crowd around through the awards, let alone after the awards, but Born Free got this figured out years ago. All it took was some incentive. From the get-go, Grant and Mike had a raffle for which the winner is announced from the main stage as the very last offering. This year, they pulled tickets for three bikes including a beautiful old Knucklehead that Kiyo (Mitsuhiro Kiyonaga) rebuilt, a stunning custom bagger built by San Diego Customs, and a brand-new stock Milwaukee-Eight Harley-Davidson Softail. And yes, of course, the winner had to be present to win.

The Born Free show has evolved over the years. The custom scooters at the show this year offer more diversity than there

used to be. There are still plenty of vintage-looking choppers, but the quality keeps getting better, and there is more and more creativity. On top of this, you see customs in the spirit of Arlen Ness that may not be the best for riding cross-country but builders are exploring how far they can push the envelope.

Born Free will be back at Oak Canyon Ranch in its original June timeslot next year, and there will be a bonus to look forward to. At the time of this writing, it seems most likely there will be a second fall iteration only in Texas. "Born Free Texas," as some are already calling it, won't be the same, but with all the energy and all the incredible bikes; it will be equally wonderful. Stay tuned as details become available in the coming months. For more info visit bornfreeshow.com. —Michael Lichter

DAVID MANN | Easyriders® LIMITED EDITION PRINTS



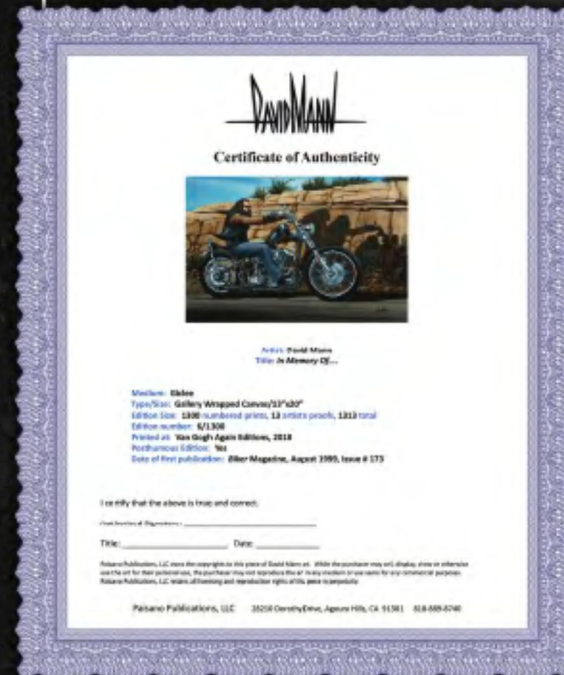
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DAVID MANN

Oliver Jones' 1937-1940 UL/EL "Dissimilar" Chopper

Sweet Berry Wine

Oliver Jones builds incredibly detailed motorcycles from his shop The Cut Rate in Long Beach, California. Legendary motorcycle photographer Michael Lichter asked Oliver if he would like to include a bike for his "What's the Skinny" Motorcycles as Art exhibition at the Sturgis Buffalo Chip a few years ago. From race bikes to long and spindly choppers, the one thing all the scooters in this show had in common was that they were incredibly thin and... skinny. Oliver said yes, and that's how this one-off wonder came to be in the pages of *Classic Easyriders*.





Oliver has always been a bit of a rebel at heart, into punk rock and skateboarding in his youth. “The biker aesthetic, or at least what I saw in the movies and around town, was appealing to me,” he tells us. “I really didn’t think about getting a bike until my mid-twenties, and didn’t have the means until I was 30. From the first day I had a bike, it has been on 100 percent and hasn’t backed off at all.”

Oliver tells us that his concept behind this bike was, “Dissimilar metals and dissimilar motors.” He wanted to combine parts that normally could not, or should not, go together. “I chose to use polished parts next to chrome, in order to ever so

slightly show the difference in base material,” he says. Known for his performance-oriented bikes, this dissimilar chopper was a step outside the norm even for the talented builder whose collection of bike builds are anything but normal. “I wanted to do something elegant and use engraving, chrome, and a regal color, but also build it to have a chopper stance and attitude.” The finished bike that he calls Sweet Berry Wine, took Best of Show at Born Free 11.

In fact, Oliver has been an invited builder for many years at Born Free starting with Born Free 6 and his scooters have been seen around the world at



custom bike shows and events. Looking back at how he got started, Oliver says, “I lived in Japan for quite a while, saw a lot of interesting bike stuff going on there and wanted to start building bikes when I got back in the states.” He had always been into building cars but his first custom bike was his very own first bike, a Yamaha TW-200 back in 2008. “I went out and bought a bike having never ridden one before. I rode it around all night, then came home and stripped it all down to the frame. I ended up building everything from scratch. The only things that were left stock were the tires and motor.”

His first Harley was a 1986 883 Sportster



that Oliver says didn't stay stock for even a day once he got ahold of it. When asked which bike builders have influenced his work, Jones mentions the King of Customs, Arlen Ness, though he takes inspiration from everything. After many successes building customs for Born Free, Oliver was approached by Mike Lichter for his "What's the Skinny" exhibition. "For this bike, I wanted to use old parts and capture a vintage feeling in some of the details, this in itself is somewhat dissimilar," Oliver says. But he turned the chopper world on its ear with what came next, involving his choice of powertrain.

Starting with a set of 1937 Harley-Davidson UL cases married to a 1940 twin

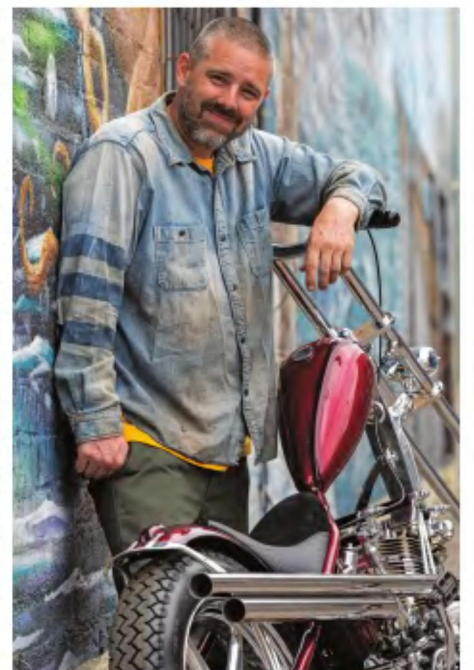
carb, open rocker Knucklehead top end, the look of the finished motor is unlike any I've ever seen, and I have seen a lot of choppers in my day. "The engine has a Flathead bottom end with a Knucklehead overhead valve top end," Oliver says. "They're two completely different engines." Yet the dissimilar metals and engines amazingly fit together as a cohesive whole. It's like an antique clock in its antique mechanical perfection. As if that wasn't enough, Oliver then coupled this marvelous motor to a Harley-Davidson 1940's 4-speed ratchet top transmission.

When it comes to the unique rigid frame, Oliver explains that, "I used a 1930-something VL engine cradle with a

Panhead rear hardtail section and mated it to a Greeves MX cast-aluminum neck and downtube." He grins when he confides, "I wanted to confuse people. Anyone who knows anything knows that you can't weld aluminum and steel together, so it's hard to tell how it's connected." The mystery and wonder of this ride continues everywhere you look, with each new detail.

Jones made the front end, bars and all the tins from scratch. The fender struts were hand carved and then cast, even the pipes are all hand-made. When asked what his favorite part of the bike is, Oliver says, "It's hard to say. Basically the overall look and feel, but if I had to pick, I really like the rear fender and taillight lines." So do we.

"As a prerequisite, all my bikes are skinny, so that made this build the perfect candidate for Michael's 'What's the Skinny?' show." Oliver handles all the welding, fabricating and bodywork himself on his builds and he is now learning how to custom paint and even do computer modeling for future creations. "I have a thirst to do everything myself," he says. But he also wants to thank all those who have helped along the way. "Special thanks to my buddies Bryce Rey, Fast Eddie, Fury, Andrew, Danny, Andy, SK Machine, Bondo, and Nitro Bill. I want to say thank you to anyone who ever handed me a wrench or held something while I welded it." —*Dave Nichols*



Oliver Jones
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Photos: Michael Lichter

Valerie Thompson

AMERICA'S QUEEN OF SPEED

Valerie Thompson is without a doubt America's Queen of Speed. She is a ten-time land speed record holder and the world's fastest female motorcycle racer, hitting an incredible 328.467 mph in the BUB 7 motorcycle streamliner. Known as Australia's fastest female motorcycle land speed racer, Thompson is consistently ranked in the Top 10 fastest motorcycle racers and included in the Dealernews "Top 100 Leaders in Powersports" list. She is a member of numerous 200 MPH Clubs, one 300 MPH Club, and was inducted into the Sturgis Motorcycle Hall of Fame in 2018. And that was all before lunch.





Most of us who ride motorcycles have “gone fast” on a bike, but we’re talking topping out at 110 or 120mph. The fastest I ever went was 160mph on a 1000R Ninja. Even at that speed, the wind becomes a solid wall of force. So I had to ask Valerie, what does it feel like to pilot a Streamliner to over 300 miles per hour?

“It starts with me walking to the streamliner in my fire suit and helmet. Focusing and getting my head around what is about to happen. My team is pushing and pulling me into a tiny cockpit that was made just to fit me. I’m squeezed into my form-fitted seat and then strapped in with multiple safety harnesses. When it’s all done, I feel like a sardine in a can. They close the canopy over me and it’s quiet for a moment, but all my focus is now on making history.

“When the engine comes to life I go into my calm zone... I’m 100% focused. I

touch the controls and know I won’t let go until the run is complete. Then I am off! While the experience is initially loud and bumpy it somehow becomes serene as I gather speed and most of the noise moves behind me. As I gain speed, it becomes obvious how close to the ground I’m sitting, but I can’t afford any distractions. I get tunnel vision, only paying attention to the track in front of me and my RPMs as they steadily climb to optimum range. In first gear I’ll hit 190 mph, in second gear I’m up to 255, in third gear I’ll hit 335 and in fourth I’ll reach 360+ mph.”

“Oddly, it all happens in slow motion and I don’t think about how fast I’m going. Inside the streamliner you don’t feel the wind so you don’t get a sense of how fast you are going. Sometimes a run that feels the slowest is actually the fastest. My execution has to be perfect and every run is a chance to make history. When you’re

racing, you have to manage your fear. You have to understand the limits of your machine and have complete confidence in yourself, your vehicle and your team.”

I asked Valerie what inspires her to take these risks. She smiled and said, “The challenge.” When asked how she got into racing, what inspired her, she says, “Nobody inspired me to race when I started in my late 30’s. It was the challenge when I was told I couldn’t do it. Mainly, I wanted to avoid getting tickets on my street bike. Friends told me I was out of control, to take it to the racetrack. Once I started competing at the local drag strip, I never left. My racing career began in the All Harley Drag Racing Association (AHDRA) after securing sponsorship from my H-D dealership. In my second year of racing, I placed third in the national rankings for the V-Rod Destroyer class and won the Best Appearing Team Award as well.”

Jesse Jurens of Legend Air was a big inspiration to Valerie, encouraging her first land speed racing efforts. “He invited me to the Bonneville Salt Flats to race the Harley-Davidson V-Rod. Even though I was nervous, I bucked up and hauled everything to Utah. On my first run I went 153 mph, doing everything I could just to hold on, rookie-style. At speed, the wind became a solid force shoving my helmet back until I started choking. Luckily, I had a lot of great teachers who took me under their wing over the years, including Jesse, Keith Ball, Kerry Alter, Marlo Treit, Denis Manning and the famous racer Wink Eller.”

Valerie’s racing career led her into the biker lifestyle, not the other way around. Now she’s on a mission to rewrite motorsports history with the dual-engine Treit & Davenport Target 550 streamliner team by breaking the current FIA conventional wheel-driven, piston-powered automobile

class speed record of 415.867 mph.

But that’s not all. Valerie will have a busy 2022 starting with two spring testing sessions and plans to compete at the Bonneville Motorcycle Speed Trials with the BUB 7 Streamliner after a five-year rebuilding process. She will also be the designated rider at select events for both the Team Turbo Tiger Kawasaki and Motus 1650cc MSTR owned by Robert Swartz.

If successful with both the Target 550 and Team 7 Racing teams, Valerie will become the first woman to ever go over 400 mph in a car and over 400 in a streamliner motorcycle, something that nobody, man or woman, has ever accomplished.

Thompson’s relentless quest to become the world’s fastest motorcycle racer is a key plot line in “Rockets and Titans,” an upcoming film documentary about the competitive world of land speed

motorcycle racing. You may have also seen Valerie featured in award-winning documentary films, including “Why We Ride,” “Out of Nothing” and “Mega Speed” (Discovery Channel).

Valerie’s fascinating life story is not only the subject of documentary films, but award winning books as well. Over the last 18 months, she has been featured “*History of Speed*” by Martin Roach (Simon & Schuster UK), “*The Motolady’s Book of Women Who Ride*” by Alicia Mariah Elfving, “*Images of America: Bonneville Salt Flats*” and “*Bonneville’s Women of Land Speed Racing*” by “*LandSpeed*” Louise Ann Noeth.

Seeking a new challenge away from racing, she started playing pickleball in February 2021 and instantly fell in love with America’s fastest growing sport. After just eight games, she built her own backyard court. What started as a new element of her fitness regime soon led to playing 4-5+



times a week, professional lessons, attending LevelUp Pickleball camps and playing in her first tournaments.

Valerie's pickleball passion has generated enormous media interest resulting in cover and feature stories in *USA Pickleball* (Official Magazine of Pickleball by USA Pickleball Association), *Bentley* (Official publication for Bentley owners), *Scottsdale Living*, *Woman Rider*, and Harley-Davidson's *Enthusiast* magazines.

Her temporary pickleball court on the famed Salt Flats, the world's fastest racecourse, made front-page news in the *Wendover-Times* after a spirited game with the city's Mayor during the 2021 Speed Week competition. In addition to capturing new speed records, Valerie's goals include earning a professional pickleball players rating after winning two Silver Medals in just her second tournament.

You can become a part of this history-making quest by sponsoring Valerie and her independent team to shatter barriers and set new speed records!

—Dave Nichols and Eric Studer

Visit ValerieThompsonRacing.com for more information or follow her at:



Photos: Provided by Valerie Thompson



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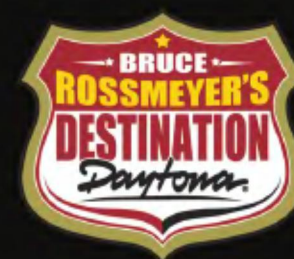
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CHOPPERTOWN LIVE!

CHEROKEE BLUE RIDGE RUN

What do you call it when you bring a bunch of bikers together to celebrate choppers, the chopper lifestyle and all the fun that goes along with it? Sprinkle in a few custom vans, hot rods, and really cool vendors? We call it Choppertown Live!

Choppertown Live, sponsored by Born To Ride, headed to the beautiful countryside of Cherokee, North Carolina, where

the chopper show was part of the Cherokee Blue Ridge Run this past September 10th, 11th and 12th. Staying true to form with the first Choppertown Live event in Florida a few months back, Born To Ride showcased some of the very best bike builders found in the entire Southeast.

Four Florida builders brought along a total of 15 beautiful bikes. There was George Casale of Goodlooking Customs

who brought up his award-winning scooters. Jared Weems of Weems Motor Co. brought his beautiful David Mann-inspired choppers that will be on permanent display at Barber Motorsports Museum. Then there was George Girod out of South Florida who brought his fresh new Triumph build called 'Endless Summer.' Last, but certainly not least on this impressive list of Florida builders, was







Nick Pensabene of Mad Pen Cycles out of the Daytona area. Every one of Nick's amazing builds offer the perfect blend of artistic creativity and style.

There was also a great contingent of builders representing the entire Southeast such as John and Kristin Shipwash of 'The Rebel Spirit' in North Carolina returning to Choppertown with their groovy Honda chopper build, as well as a couple others nice scooters. Brandon Shipwash of Midnight Oil Cycles, also out of North Carolina, brought a bunch of great builds. Our friends at The Low Road Motor Co. showed us how they do things in the Atlanta area, and Stay Humble Performance from North Carolina was on hand with a couple of great rides. As if all that wasn't enough, the Chillebunnys and Chillebillys returned to Choppertown Live to turn the good time factor up to eleven! The Chillebillys are known for their far-out choppers, vans and other 1970's-style customs.

The Cherokee Blue Ridge Run Born To Ride Choppertown Ride-in Show was open to all makes and models of motorcycles. If antique motorcycles were your thing, there was also be a separate Vintage Motorcycle



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Show on Saturday. So custom or classic, this run had you covered.

Born To Ride gave away five sets of VeeRubber tires from Metalsport Wheels to our Choppertown Live builders plus \$1,000 CASH and prizes to the bike show winners. Long time *Easyriders* photo-grapher Brad Patton was on hand to snap the photos seen here and to shoot the Best of Show chopper for *Classic Easyriders*.

Ace photographer Jim Dolms had his amazing art on display in the Choppertown Live Pavilion and sensational moto painter Makoto Endo painted a live performance of his unbelievable art. All this plus legendary custom bike builder and painter Dave Perewitz was there to pick the best custom paint of the weekend.

The Cherokee Blue Ridge Run is located deep in the heart of some of the best motorcycle riding in the United States. Add an impressive lineup of bands, entertainment, vendors, great people and you can see why this was a weekend that many will not soon forget. For more information on the next Cherokee Blue Ridge Run, call 888-795-5779 or visit cherokeeblueridgerun.com.

—Erick Runyon



Photos: Brad Patton



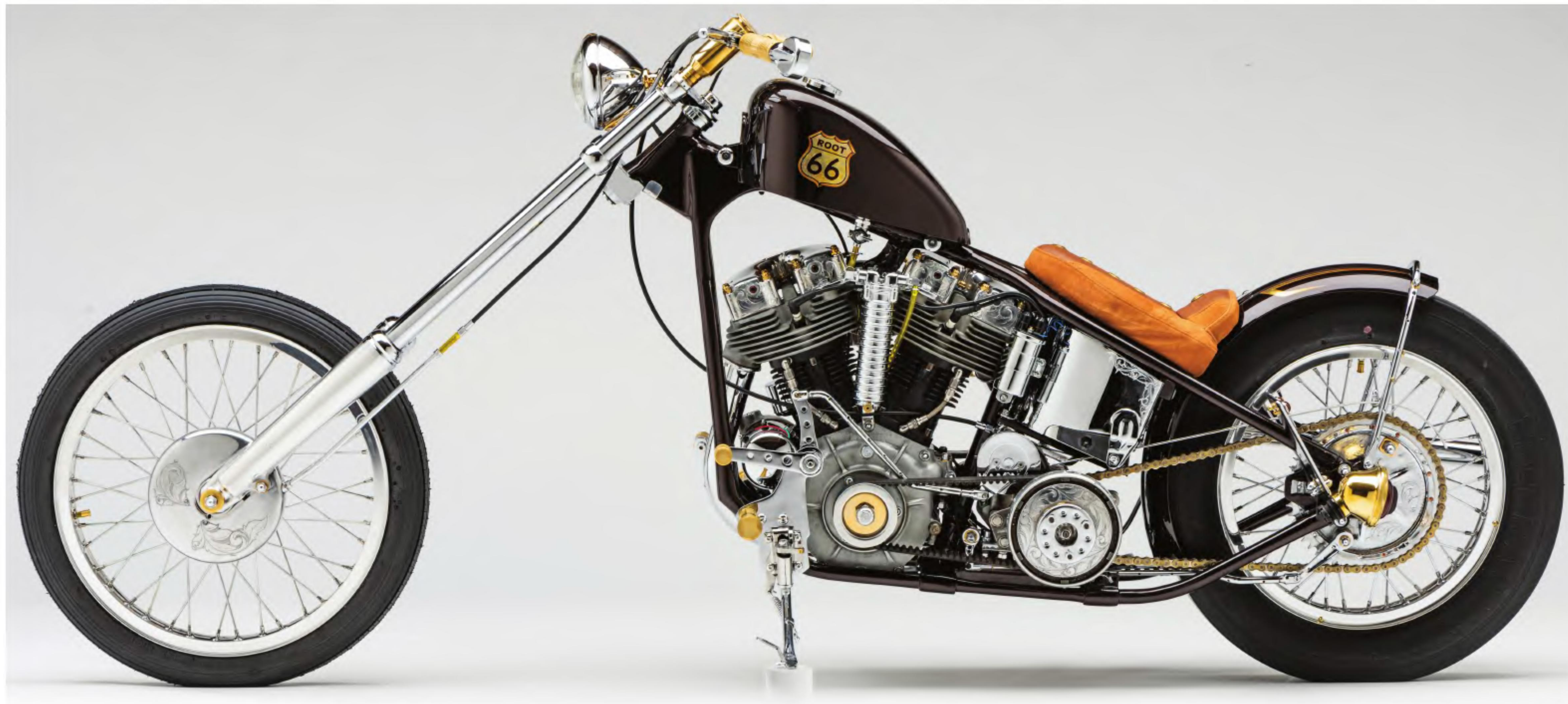


Tim Scates' 1952 Pan/Shovel



For many years, two familiar faces at all of our Easyriders Bike Shows were Tim Scates and his wife Tina who make their home in Waller, Texas. They always had a smile and at least one killer custom motorcycle with them to put in the show. They took home many awards over the years and Mike Lichter shot quite a few of Tim's scooters for the pages of *Easyriders* magazine. The bike seen here was built for Mike's Motorcycles as Art Exhibition a few years ago and we just had to show it to you in the new *Classic Easyriders* magazine. Having one of Tim's motorcycles grace our pages is only fitting as the legend continues.

Since Root 66 was built for Michael's museum show, we asked him to write a few words to capture both his excellent exhibition and this sweet rigid Pan/Shovel. —*Dave Nichols*



Mild mannered construction worker by day and custom bike builder by night - this is Tim Scates and this is why he was a perfect fit for "Passion Built," my Motorcycles as Art exhibition in Sturgis a few years back. With the premise of the show being that you had to make your living from something other than building custom bikes, Tim's separation of work from his passion was a shoe-in.

Tim's work operating heavy equipment in the oil fields every day includes a great

benefit, time for Tim to ponder his next custom bike build. Then after work, he heads right into his forty-foot-long metal shipping container in the backyard where he has just enough room for tool boxes, a lift table and himself. This is where he designs and fabricates most of the parts that are incorporated into his bikes, much of which is inspired by antique cars and motorcycles he's seen throughout his life. Once the build begins to progress and he needs a little more "elbow room," he moves out into the open air under a carport right

next to the container shop.

This project began when I approached Tim at the Handbuilt Show in Austin, Texas just as a spot became available in the "Passion Built" exhibition with only 12-weeks to the opening. Having photographed magazine features of several of Tim's bikes in the past for *Easyriders*, I knew he had the passion and dedication to get a quality build together in this short time. Fortunately, he had been thinking about building an old school chopper like those his Hot-Rodding Dad used to paint when

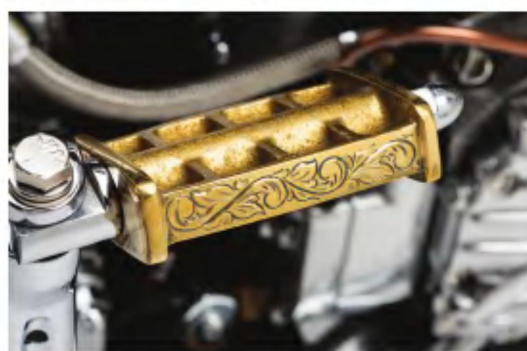
he was a kid in their home garage for his Dad's motorcycle friends. Tim tells us he used to paint all his own builds until he figured that, being a perfectionist, it was better to use this time for fabrication, so he started having a friend paint his bikes for him.

Tim had been more than thinking about this old school build while working, he had actually already found most of the parts he would need. When it came to the engine, he had several options to choose from right on his shelves. There was a 1956 Panhead, an original House of Horsepower Shovel,

and a couple of early Evo motors. And then, there was the "One," a super cool 1952 Panhead that Tim knew had to go into this build. It measured in at 105-cubic inches, which with its large pistons and longer stroke, meant a Pan top end wouldn't work. A Shovelhead top end was needed to accommodate this oversized engine (and yes, most people assume this bike is a Shovelhead at first glance).

For the frame, Tim continued the old school vibe with a matching 1952 Harley-Davidson original frame that he raked to

42 degrees and molded himself. He actually had to raise the backbone 1-inch to accommodate the larger engine, which he was able to do without messing with the neck geometry by lengthening the seat tube. Even so, the rocker boxes come very close to touching the frame. With the 12-inches over Wide Glide front end, its slightly raised posture is absolutely perfect. The drag slick on the back adds that aggressive race-inspired feel that many of those old choppers also sported back in the day.



Tim appropriately named this bike "Root 66" because the paint color is DuPont Rootbeer and the bike was 66 years old when it was finished and put up on a pedestal in the Sturgis gallery out at the Buffalo Chip. The Pan/Shovel's name is also a perfect chopper moniker the way it makes you think of that classic Route 66 highway that choppers used to cross in the American Southwest, including the Captain America and Billy Panheads from the film *Easy Rider*. The legendary road spans 2,400 miles, starting in Chicago, Illinois and traverses eight states and three time zones before ending up right at the Santa Monica pier in California.

Okay Tim, sounds like it's time for a road trip! —*Michael Lichter*



Tim Scates

@twisted.bobber





When I was invited by my good friend Dmitry Khitrov to visit Siberia to photograph the Baikal Mile Ice Speed Festival on Lake Baikal, there could only be one answer, “Yes.” That’s my standard answer to any invitation with the possibility of adventure, and especially when there are motorcycles and cars involved. This particular invite had the added distinction

of including the “unknown,” which took it up another notch.

This was the second edition of a racing event first held in 2019 on meter-thick ice in the middle of Siberia’s Lake Baikal. Now doesn’t that sound remote? The idea was the brain child of Dmitry’s partner Sergey Maltsev, who dreamt it up several years ago. I have to admit that I was a little nervous. Siberia in February? How

would my cameras function in that kind of cold? How would I function in that kind of cold? Of course, the chance for a novel experience beat down any silly questions and won the day. I was off.

For each of us, the mention of “Siberia” conjures up a different image, but most would agree that whatever that image might look like, it is both very big and very cold. During this trip, I wrote to a friend,

Motorized Magic in Siberia

BAIKAL MILE ICE RACING



“Greetings from Siberia,” and he belatedly wrote back after seeing a photo of me somewhere, “OMG, you’re really in Siberia! I thought you meant it was just freezing cold in Colorado.” I’m sure that while preparing for this trip, when I learned that the coldest temperature recorded in Siberia (actually the coldest in the Northern Hemisphere) was -67.7°C (in the town of Oymyakon), I unduly freaked myself out! Thankfully, this wasn’t near where we were headed and we never did experience crazy cold. There used to be another kind of “cold” in Siberia (as in “Cold War”) but that’s an entirely different and more complicated story we’ve thankfully moved beyond.

To get to Siberia, my son Sean and I re-

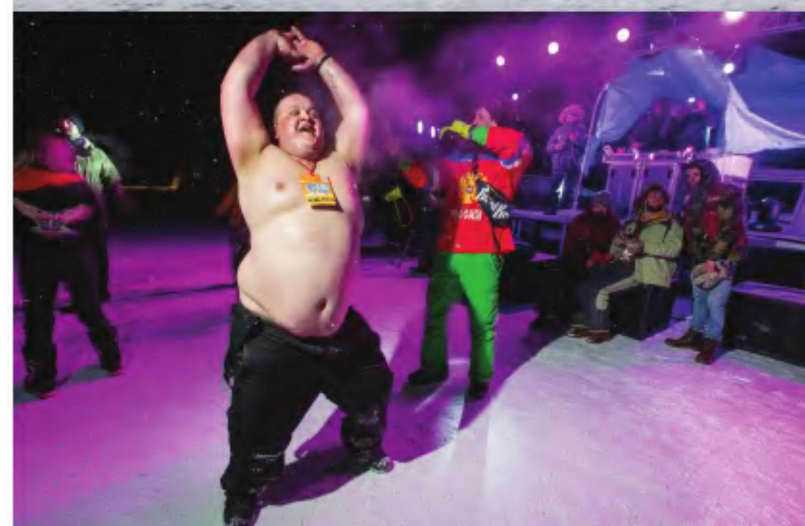
corded 19-hours in the air on three planes (not counting layovers and ground transport), the last of which was an overnight flight from Moscow. The drive to Lake Baikal, and the lake itself brought my attention to the sheer size of Siberia. Can you imagine it spans 11-time zones and makes up almost nine-percent of the Earth’s land surface (13.1 million square KM).

The author Ian Frazier, who wrote the book *Travels in Siberia*, said, “Siberia is so big, it’s almost more an idea than a place.” Coming from the west of the USA, I know something about size and space, but this really was something else. We felt it as we drove through beautiful forests and along the banks of the lake. If you could drive all

the way around (the northern end is so sparse there aren’t really roads), you would experience 2,100 km of coastline! This is actually the biggest freshwater lake by volume in the world.

Together with the French custom bike builder Bertrand Dubet and expert mechanic Simon Pitelet, we arrived at the hotel in Maksimikha just as the sun went down. Dmitry and Sergey immediately whisked us straight onto the lake to see the breathtaking views at dusk as well as the Speed Village that was coming together. Let the races begin!

We woke up Tuesday morning to a beautiful sunny day as more people and bikes arrived. The speed tests and qualifying





didn't start until Thursday, but there was much to be. You would think they would just repeat what they did in 2019 for the first edition, but last year was really just a test. It was a gathering of likeminded crazy petrol-heads who met on the ice in Siberia to see what they could do. There were just 30 vehicles and that included all bikes and cars combined. Most of the people didn't know each other before the event, but once they were all together, in the hot Banya (steam bath), sharing tools and knowledge as they tuned together, drank vodka in the evenings and raced, they realized they had created something special. It had legs and it wasn't about to stop.

For 2020, Dmitry and Sergey wanted to

make an event that would be fun and safe even as they knew it would grow wildly. Of course, it had to respect the environment by not leaving behind even a drop of oil, as they believe Baikal to be the purest lake in the world. Next on their list were the more serious sports aspects of timing and records, but these seemed far down the list compared to "fun" since really, everybody was coming to have a good time.

These organizers also knew there had limitations, particularly the lack of accommodations (there is just one winterized hotel open in the village), but people quickly realized they could stay in surrounding villages over an expanded area and that there were Airbnb's as well. Limiting the entries to the

first 114 vehicles that signed up in advance was another way to be sure they could handle what and who would show up. You may wonder could there be any spectators at an event in the middle of Siberia, but with one of their main partners being the tourist board for the entire Buryatian region, they weren't worried.

To be prepared for a big crowd, carpenters, electricians, and workers were busy on the ice setting up the pit area with heated tents and Yurts where bikes could be tuned, larger tents for media and catering, grandstands, a big stage for the opening ceremonies as well perimeter fencing around the courses and public areas. Meanwhile, the two separate mile-long





tracks that headed into the distance in a “V” (one for 2-wheels, one for 4-wheels) were being groomed every moment of daylight to be sure they would be just right.

Racers kept busy with refitting their vehicles to the conditions and last minute tuning. Hotrods and crated bikes came off of semi’s in the parking area where many owners started working on them right there. Bertrand’s Salt & Copper Aprilia RSV4 was unloaded and moved into the hotel’s basement garage where he and Simon could reassemble what was taken apart to ship it from France. Two other bikes arrived from Europe, including Bene Zaccherini’s 1999 Husqvarna WR 360 from Italy. Bene had help from French ice-

stud manufacturer and mechanic Raphael Bonifay of 2RTeam in France, who came to work with her.

The third European bike was Workhorse Speed Shop’s Brice Hennebert’s “Appaloo-sa” Indian Scout Bobber that came from Belgium and was piloted by French custom builder Sebastien Lorentz of Luckycat Garage. The European presence added an international air to the event that I believe was intended, as they were out last season promoting at Wheels and Waves, Glem-seck and in Faakersee. I imagine that next year will bring even more bikes and racers from afar to really turn this into an international event.

There was a buzz in the air from all the

activity from the moment we arrived. Everyone was in great spirits, not to mention that spirits being liberally shared. On Thursday, after everyone had their machines inspected, it was time to get out on the ¼-mile track where those that never raced on ice could get used to the feel. This was also a required run, as all racers had to qualify here before moving onto the mile-long track.

When I say “all” racers, I mean not only all the motorcycles, sidecars, trikes and hotrods you may expect, but also the bicycles, one-wheeled uni-motorcycles as well as quads, a large Scania truck, a number of air-boats, mini-bikes, go-carts, and even a Bentley Continental that was converted into an “Ultra-tank” by the YouTuber

Photos: Michael Lichter

“Academeg.” The only thing I saw race down the mile track that didn’t pre-qualify was the giant Russian Mi8 helicopter that showed up.

As predicted, Saturday was big. Between racers, crew and people, there were about a thousand that flew in, and mostly from Moscow 6,000 km away. Then there were the locals that the authorities believed numbered close to 5,000. What a response! As each racer brought their machine up on stage and they were introduced, there was a big cheer after which they proceeded to parade down a gauntlet through the crowd until they were eventually stopped by fans surrounding them for photos. This was interspersed with groups of Buriyatian dancers and musicians in regional dress showing off their talents. Keep in mind that we are just north of the Mongolian border on this part of Lake Baikal, so the culture lives deep within these people.

There were some who took the event more seriously than others, like Alexander Mishkinis who raced his BMW S1000RR to the fastest time of the event at 263 kmh. There was also a large and very serious group from Moscow Polytechnic University that built an electric race bike piloted by

Mikhail Mikhin that went 210 kmh. By the way, the speed is actually clocked just before the end of the mile, and it isn’t exactly the 1,608 meters that make a mile either. You see, they decided to go with “1-Baikal Mile” which is equivalent to the depth of the lake (the deepest in the world) at 1,642 meters.

Other racers included custom bike builders showing off, and racing their bikes such as Yaroslav Tatarinov with his 2008 Kawasaki 1350 GTR 1350cc naked racer with incredible hand-crafted aluminum bodywork and AMD world champion Dima Golubchikov with his twin engine Jawa speedway-inspired bike

For most racers, it was fun just to see they could go a little faster with each pass, but regardless how they performed, they were happy just being on the ice. Spectators, tuners and photographers like myself were just plain happy to be there. So many other experiences shaped this incredible journey that I can just touch on some, like the Banya on the ice shared with friends and followed by a dip in the water cut right through the ice. I met so many Russian friends, shared a room with the amazing cold weather riding

Alessandro “Wizz” Ciceri who was on a 15,000 km trip from his home in Lugo, Italy through Siberia in WINTER to Vladivostok on the Pacific Ocean.

Saturday night, when all was said and done, magic happened on the ice. There was a wrap party DJ’d by Bryce and the Belgian delegation who set up on a stage with just simple plastic to cover themselves and keep the equipment dry from falling snow. Great colored lighting dissolved with the music and lit the snow so the air sparkled like a fairytale. We were all enchanted as the dancing continued into the night. It was all so amazing, but it was time to say goodbye. With my French friends Bertrand, Simon, Fred and Raphael, and Bene from Italy, my son Sean and I slipped off to drill a hole in the ice. A shot of Vodka was poured in so we could each have our own “Baikal Kiss,” as this is called. What a great way to say goodbye.

You can see more of the Baikal Mile on IG by visiting @baikal_mile. For anyone interested in bringing a bike to race next year, contact organizers via Facebook or IG, Dmitry Khitrov @running_cool, or Dmitry by phone/WhatsApp +7-926-220-7498.

—Michael Lichter

Michael Lichter over forty years photographing the bikes, the people, the attitude...



LichterPhoto.com

"Because in the end, you won't remember the time
you spent working in the office or mowing your lawn.
Climb that goddamn mountain." Jack Kerouac
—Ben Zales, *El Lay*



James Roper-Caldbeck finds fourth somewhere
in the forests of Copenhagen.
—Siwer Ohlsson, Sweden



"Love is the feeling you get when you like something as much as your motorcycle." Dr. Hunter S. Thompson
—Ben Zales, El Lay

Mike Dugan and Carol Lefferts both grab a handful on the road to Arizona Bike Week.
—Mike Dugan, Gardena Calif.



Road Warriors Beatnik,
Linda, (RIP) Roger and
office chick, 1995.
—Bomber, Aztlan

IntheWind



How we rolled in the flower power days.
—Jake Roca



Assume the position.
—Ben Zales, El Lay

Teasin' with Torrie

Meet talented Texan Torrie Blake. She's your cover model next month in Classic Easyriders. How'd you like her to swing by your place for a longneck and a few laughs?

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Weather is always a concern for a drifter. If you're out on the road long enough, you'll blow through every conceivable extreme and learn quick enough what your tolerance levels are. Personally, heat does me in every time so I map out the sensitive

areas according to the seasonal whims of Mother Nature. Case in point would be Death Valley, California. Now, everybody from around the world knows the Valley's well-documented rep as being the hottest place on earth, yet folks still venture out to see the sights and risk

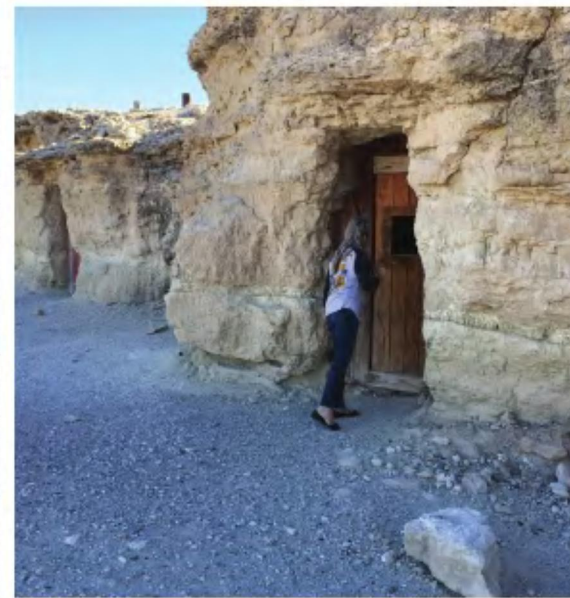
their lives during the blazing hot months of summer. And some people die. Triple digit temps are unforgiving and for the last two years, 130-degrees were recorded there in June. Riders, for the most part, respect Ma Nature and save DV trips for February through April when the wildflowers are in bloom and temps are more reasonable. Even then, though, monitoring the daily weather reports is prudent. Some of the desert is weather beaten, Wild West territories remain largely unappreciated by tourists so it's cool to traipse around through history; places like the ghost town of Beatty, Nevada. Considered the "Gateway" to Death Valley, Beatty residents throw down some fun annual parties and resting just down the road are cool works of art and various castaways. From boxcars and rusty trucks to ghostly sculptures that are fun to play in, Rhyolite is a nifty roadside art gallery exhibited in the harshest of environments. There's absolutely nothing else there so don't expect services or soft drinks, it's just a kitschy-cool

place to check out on your way to somewhere else. Like Shoshone and Tecopa. Just 130 miles away and surrounded by desert desolation, is an old mining community and the nearby Tecopa Hot Springs, which are both less than an hour's ride from Death Valley's Furnace Creek Resort. Shoshone has the long-ago-abandoned remnants of miner's dwellings dug into a hillside and a washed out cemetery where crude graves are marked with decaying wood alongside polished marble headstones. There is no signage about the camp, but it's easily found and you can wander amongst the debris and dwellings. Down the road, Tecopa is about two miles off State Highway 127. The natural hot springs there are said to heal body aches and after several days in the saddle this place is sheer magic, but don't even bother to visit if you're the five-star, wanna-be-pampered kind because this scene definitely ain't for you. This is an "au natural" experience. Mineral pools reaching 104-degrees are scattered about the Tecopa area and while

there are a couple of run down resorts in town that offer cheap day passes to their cemented pools, a short walk into the desert will render a free experience that you'll never forget. The clay mud of the natural pools is said to contain healing minerals that, at the very least, make your skin feel incredible. Just dig down past the surface and sink in deep. At the very most, as it was in my case, the stuff kind of draws the aches out of your bones. Locals come out to carry mud home for private application, but I once met some folks from Holland there so the springs aren't exactly a secret. Nudity is commonplace and folks keep to themselves as they strip down and mud up for a healing soak among the reeds. There's a palpable reverence and sincere awe of Mother Nature's healing energy around the pools and everyone is respectful and cleans up after themselves. I suggest you be prepared to just relax afterward since a good soak will turn you into Gumby. Between the mud, the warmth of the water

and the peaceful quiet of the desert, you can't help but notice a deep sense of tranquility creeping into your soul. There are a couple of eateries with tasty fare in either Tecopa or Shoshone but reliable hours aren't part of the repertoire so you might want to call ahead. During a January trip a while back, I met a local lady over in Shoshone who is a healer and these days I ride over her way every chance I get since Karin Pine is incredible. As a massage therapist, she has a brick n' mortar building right on the main drag in town and works by appointment only, but once on her table you immediately realize you're in knowing and capable hands. She can smooth out a lifetime of lumps. Or, in my case, hardtail and kick start kinks along with a myriad of dings from a motorcycle crash. Or two. Between the hot springs, mud and massage you'll leave the desert with a deep sense of peace and ready to tackle the next 100,000 miles... just not in the summer. —Felicia Morgan

Photos: Felicia Morgan



Chris Wilson Show-winning Shovel

During Born To Ride's Choppertown ride-in chopper show at the Blue Ridge Run in Cherokee, North Carolina, last September, we asked our photographer Brad Patton to shoot the Best of Show bike for a Reader's Ride here in *Classic Easyriders*. Bike builder and owner of this sweet Shovelhead, Chris Wilson tells us that almost every single part on this scooter has been misused, modified, or fabricated at his shop, Low Road Motor Company out of Roswell, Georgia.

One look at this bad boy screams, "That bike belongs in *Classic Easyriders*!" Beginning with a 1980 Harley-Davidson FLH, Chris took this bike down to the frame. The Shovel motor has been stroked to 98 cubic inches and includes S&S Cycle pistons, lower end, and Super E carburetor, a Morris Magneto ignition, Trident cycle air cleaner and hand-fabbed exhaust by Southern Stahl Werks/Low Road Motor

Company. The tranny is a 2019 Baker 6-in-4 with a custom hand shift.

"This is the first vehicle that I have built from scratch," Chris tells us. "I've been modifying and customizing motor vehicles my whole life. This bike started as parts and every single part was individually acquired for the sole purpose of being a part of this build. It took me over two years to collect the parts and build the bike in my head, then another year to put it all together, but I had a vision and I knew that I could make it happen. I enlisted my brother from another mother, Dusty from Southern Stahl Werks, to help my dream become a reality. Dusty and I have been friends for almost 30 years and we've always been into cars and bikes. Over the last couple of decades Dusty has become one of the best metal fabricators in the southeast."

Low Road and Southern Stahl Werks worked together massaging the stock FLH Harley frame, leaving the stock rake, but doing a drop seat conversion with Progressive Suspension shocks out back



along with a Jeff Cochran adjustable swing arm to finish out the rear end. There are many other subtle mods to the frame, including replacing the factory upper motor mount and neck gusset, as well as removing all of the factory tabs and filling the factory holes.

The Mid USA chrome springer is two inches under stock, lovingly assembled by Low Road Motors, and the trick oil tank/battery box, which houses all of the electronics including the speedometer and GPS sending unit, is from SpeedKing. The alternator cover is from Chopper Dave's Casting Co. Those wild lane-splitter window bars are from Southern Stahl Werks, the headlight is a repurposed vintage Unity fog lamp, and the cool, under the Cooper Smithing rear fender, taillight is from After Hours Choppers.

The House of Kolor cobalt blue and teal

paint on the tank was sprayed by Joel845 with Lewis Rod & Customs spraying the fender to match. All told, it took Chris nearly three years to get this proud pup together and roadworthy. The one-off wonder rides even better than it looks and Chris rides the tar outta this thing.

"This was the first project that Dusty and I had ever worked on and finished, and it was one of the best experiences of my life. It's been a literal dream come true," Chris concludes. "The bike has won a ton of awards and been shot for *Chop Cult* and *Classic Easyriders*, but that is all just the icing on the cake. The build experience is something that will live with me until the day that I die."

If you'd like to see your bike in *Classic Easyriders*, send photos and contact info to dave@classiceasyriders.com

—Dave Nichols

Ride with the amazing March issue of *Classic Easyriders* as we take you to the mighty Lone Star Rally in Galveston for a bootkickin’ Texas-sized good time. Then experience the awe and wonder of riding through Nepal and the Himalayan mountains on the Stairway to Heaven. We’ll also venture across the Pond for the psychedelic Trip Out UK chopper love-in. Meet the madcap maniac known as Danger Dan, and feast your eyes on five fantastic custom bike features. From Hawke Lawshe’s Born Free wonderbike with cover model Torrie Blake, Wayne Burgess’ perfect Panhead and Kevin “Teach” Baas’ crazy S&S Knuckle, to a Paul Yaffe Law Tigers Giveaway bagger and a classic

Dave Perewitz Sportster Digger from the good ol’, bad ol’ days. Plus, another Classic David Mann painting that will look great in your shop or garage, the latest two-wheeler parts and products for your ride, catch the freedom of Classic In The Wind shots, and you can enter to win an exact replica of the Captain America chopper from *Easy Rider*, built by Paughco MC Parts and Mondo from Denver’s Choppers. Enter the Classic Easyriders Sweepstakes today! All this and more is comin’ at ya like the kiss at the end of a big wet fist in the March issue of *Classic Easyriders*!

On sale March 1st



Lake Baikal, Siberia; Photo by Michael Lichter

Classic Easyriders magazine (ISSN 0046-0990) Number 557, February 2022. *Classic Easyriders*® is published monthly by GIT Corp., with corporate offices in Brooklyn, New York. Editorial mailing address is P.O. Box 180482, Brooklyn, NY 11218-0482, Website: classiceasyriders.com. Periodicals postage paid at Brooklyn, New York and at additional mailing offices. Copyright 2022 by GIT CORP. All rights reserved. Nothing may be reproduced without prior written permission of the Publisher. Editorial Submission Guidelines: All submitted letters, articles, jokes, poems, photos and artwork (“Submissions”) become the property of GIT CORP. (“Publisher”). The Publisher is under no obligation to keep or return any Submissions unless a SASE is provided at time of submission. The Publisher has the unrestricted right to print all or any portion of Submissions, to edit same, and to print, re-print, edit, alter or disregard all said materials at their sole discretion, in any medium now or hereafter used by Publisher in connection with its business operations. This includes, but is not limited to, magazines, books, calendars, catalogs, merchandise, advertisements, videos, television and Internet applications. No compensation is payable for letters usage but appropriate photo captions may be given (e.g. your name and city listed) at the discretion of the Publisher. All Submissions must be exclusive to the Publisher who will provide appropriate credit to the author, photographer or artist of published works, and will indicate if same has been excerpted from or materially changed from original content. Subscriptions: All correspondence regarding subscriptions and changes of address must be addressed to Classic Easyriders® Subscription Department: P.O. Box 180482, Brooklyn, NY 11218-0482. **Print Subscriptions:** One year \$60.00; two years \$108.00; three years \$144.00 in the U.S. and its possessions. Postage: Canada please add \$30.00 and all other foreign add \$50.00 per year for postage (U.S. funds only). **Digital Subscriptions:** One year \$9.99, two years \$14.99. Postmaster: Send address changes to Classic Easyriders®, P.O. Box 180482, Brooklyn, NY 11218-0482. The publisher is exempt from the record keeping requirements and disclosure statements mandated by 18 U.S. Code 2257 (a) through (c) and the pertinent Regulations, 28 C.F.R. Ch. 1, part 75, since all of such material falls within the definition of exempted material set forth in 75.7 (a) (1-3) of the pertinent Regulations. Printed and produced in the U.S.A.

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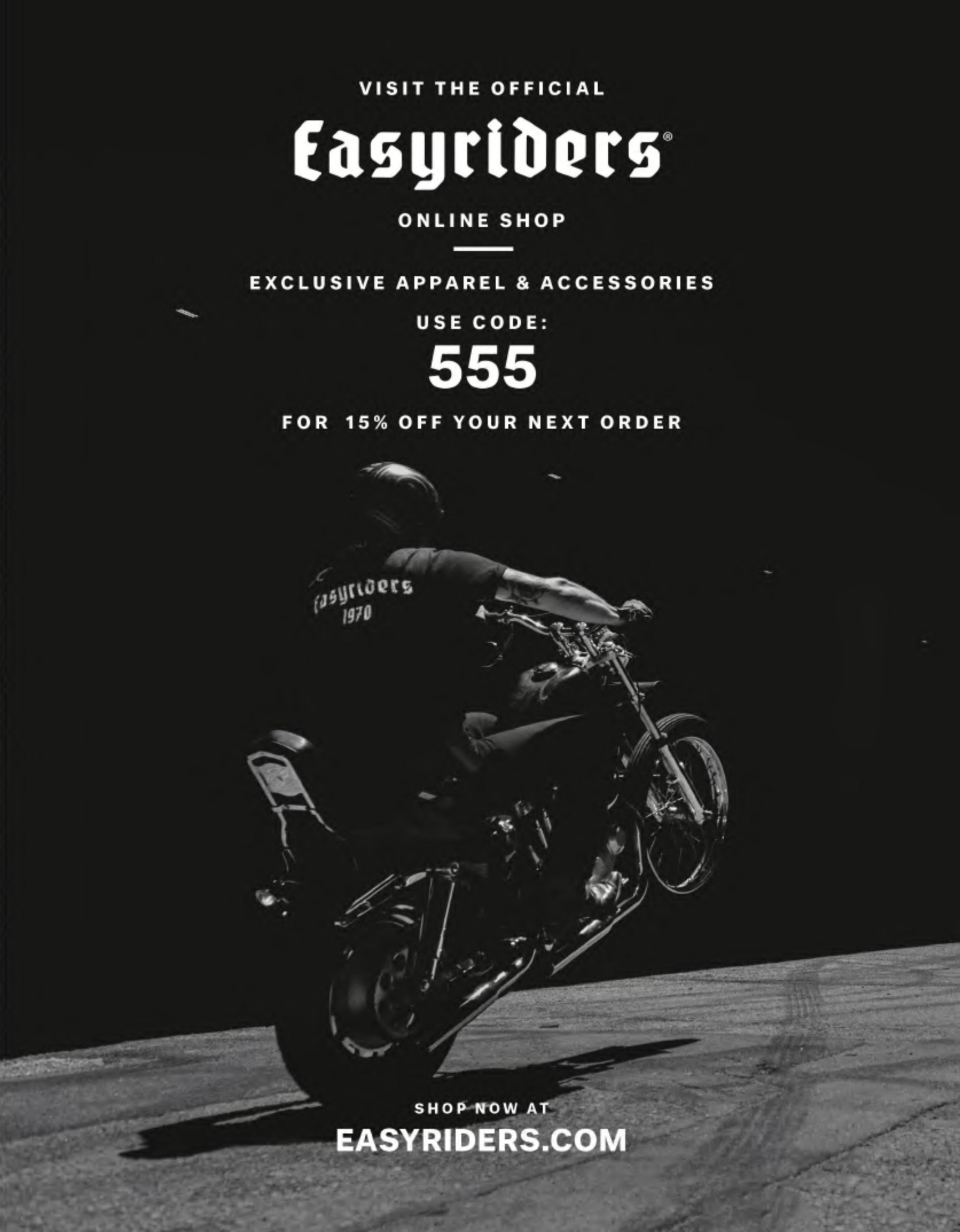
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